

### How often can vaccinia virus spread from a vaccination site to someone else?

In the past, vaccinia virus spread to somebody else between 8 and 27 times out of every 1,000,000 smallpox vaccinations. Most often, the virus spread from a vaccinated child to another child.

If the vaccinated person in your household follows the three simple steps (bandages, sleeves, hand washing), you can prevent spreading the virus to another part of the body or to someone else.

### At church or work, how close can a vaccinated person get to small children or somebody with eczema or a pregnant woman?

When around others in social settings, like church or the mall, be mindful. As previously stated, do not touch the vaccination site. Be careful when around others and follow the three simple steps (bandages, sleeves, hand washing).

In a household, people have much more intimate or close contact than in work sites or other social settings (such as churches or malls). Because household contact is more intimate, some people may be asked to separate themselves from family members who are at risk (e.g. pregnant women, immune suppressed) for a few weeks (until their scab falls off).

In most cases, normal family and household contact can continue, but avoid wrestling with the kids or other close physical contact that could brush against the vaccination site.



**How close  
can a  
vaccinated  
person get  
to an infant?**

Vaccinated people should reduce their close physical contact with infants less than one year of age until the scab falls off. If this is not possible, vaccinated people should wash their hands before handling an infant (such as feeding or changing diapers) and ensure that the vaccination site is covered with a bandage and clothing.

### Can the vaccinated person hold a baby?

Yes, if the vaccination site is bandaged, sleeves cover the bandage, and the vaccinated person washes his or her hands in hot, soapy water before holding the baby.

### Can the child of a vaccinated person spread vaccinia virus to another child at a day-care center?



The risk of passing the vaccine virus (vaccinia) to a child is extremely low, if the vaccinated person follows the three steps (bandages, sleeves, hand washing). For that child to spread the vaccinia virus to another child would be even more rare.

### What can we do to prevent the vaccinia virus spreading to household pets?

Keep household pets away from the vaccination site and bandages that covered it. The same simple steps that prevent spreading the virus elsewhere on the body or to somebody else (bandages, sleeves, hand washing) will keep the virus from reaching pets.

### What if an unvaccinated family member develops symptoms that might be related to vaccination?

They should go to their usual source of care (such as a military clinic or primary care provider/family physician) and explain that a family member just got the smallpox vaccine and that they are concerned about the symptoms.

### Want more information?

#### ▪ Military Vaccines (MILVAX) for information about vaccine or policy:

Call **877.GET.VACC**

Website **[www.smallpox.army.mil](http://www.smallpox.army.mil)**

Email **[vaccines@amedd.army.mil](mailto:vaccines@amedd.army.mil)**

#### ▪ DoD Vaccine Clinical Call Center for medical advice about your family member's smallpox vaccination:

Call **866.210.6469**

#### ▪ Vaccine Healthcare Centers (VHC):

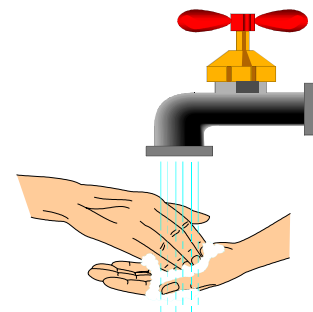
Call **202.782.0411**

Website **[www.vhcinfo.org](http://www.vhcinfo.org)**

E-Mail: **[askvhc@amedd.army.mil](mailto:askvhc@amedd.army.mil)**

## SOMEBODY IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD JUST GOT VACCINATED AGAINST SMALLPOX

What should you do?



*Your mother was right: wash your hands...*  
**Good Hygiene is the Key !**

**By following the simple steps below,  
you can help keep your household safe.**

- 1. Bandages (to prevent touching the site)**
- 2. Sleeves (long enough to prevent scratching)**
- 3. Hand washing (with soap and hot water)**

### What's going on?

Smallpox vaccine contains vaccinia virus. This virus cannot cause smallpox. This same vaccine was given to millions of Americans, including service members during World War II and up to 1990. Smallpox vaccine has been used for more than 200 years.

But this virus stays near the skin's surface for about 3 weeks, until the scab falls off. It spreads by touch. This means other people can pick up the vaccine virus and get infected. The vaccine virus is NOT spread by coughing, sneezing, or sexual contact.

Vaccinated people can prevent problems with three simple steps: use bandages, sleeves long enough to prevent scratching, and hand washing.

## What is supposed to happen after smallpox vaccination?

If vaccination is successful, a red and itchy bump (the patient shouldn't scratch it!) develops in 2 to 4 days. In a few days, the bump becomes a pus filled blister. During the second week, the blister begins to dry up and a scab forms. The scab falls off in the third week, leaving a scar.

Anyone who does not get the expected reaction at the immunization site should tell his or her clinic or healthcare provider.

Most people have mild symptoms after vaccination, such as itching, swollen glands, fever, headache, body ache, or fatigue. These symptoms usually peak 8 to 12 days after vaccination.

## What can we do to help keep the virus from spreading away from the vaccination site?

- Don't touch the vaccination site.
- If you touch it by accident, wash your hands right away.
- Don't let others touch the vaccination site or materials that touched it.

Have the vaccinated person use a bandage to prevent touching the site by accident. Long sleeves add another layer of protection. People should wash their hands with soap and hot water: after changing bandages, before and after going to the bathroom, and anytime they may have touched a vaccination site or materials that touched it. Alcohol-based cleansers, as well as soap and hot water, work well.

Dispose of bandages in sealed or double plastic bags. You may carefully add a little bleach to the bag, to kill the virus.

## What about bathing?

The patient may continue normal bathing or showering, but shouldn't let the site get soaked or scrub the vaccination site. The patient may cover the vaccination site with a water-resistant bandage before bathing or showering.



The patient should pat or blot-dry the vaccination site last with a wad of paper tissue, which is then flushed down the toilet, followed by hand washing.

Or use a towel to pat the vaccination site dry last, making sure not to rub the site or spread the virus elsewhere. Don't allow others to use that towel until laundered. Don't use public towels (e.g. at pools, gyms, etc).

## After a bath or shower, do we need to sanitize the tub before other people use it?

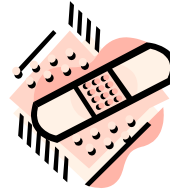
No, you don't have to sanitize a tub or sink after use. Clean any surface that touches a dirty bandage, using common disinfectants. Clean any surface or object that rubs against a vaccination site.

## What will help the vaccination site heal?

Leave it alone and let nature take its course. Do NOT use creams or ointments; they will slow healing and can spread the virus. Keep the vaccination site dry. Airing the site will help the scab to dry and fall off. But air it only when you are not around others and be careful not to scratch it.

## How should we get rid of used bandages at home?

Dispose of bandages in sealed or double plastic bags. You may carefully add a little bleach to the bag, if desired, to kill the virus.



When the scab falls off, flush it down the toilet or dispose of it carefully (in a plastic bag with bleach) in the trash. Wash your hands with soap and hot water.

## How long should the bandage stay in place, before being replaced by a new one?

Keep the bandage in place until a change is needed. For example, when there is enough drainage from the vaccination site to soak the pad. It can be changed more often, if you want. Always wash your hands with soap and hot water after changing a bandage.

## Who should change the dressing or bandage?

You can help the vaccinated person change the bandage, unless there is a medical reason for you not to get the vaccine yourself (such as: pregnant, immune-compromised, history of eczema). Carefully dispose of it and wash your hands with soap and hot water afterwards.

## Can I sleep in the same bed as somebody who just got vaccinated against smallpox?

Yes, unless there is a medical reason for you not to get the smallpox vaccine yourself. The main reasons would be a chronic skin condition (such as eczema or atopic dermatitis), a disease or medication that weakens your immune system, or pregnancy.

In some cases, service members will be separated for up to 21 days if their family members have medical exemptions. While this separation may be hard on the family, it is to protect those individuals that cannot get vaccinated.

If none of the medical exemptions apply to you or another member of your immediate household, then your family member who was just vaccinated should follow the three simple steps: use bandages, long sleeves, and hand washing.

## Can I have sex with somebody who just got vaccinated against smallpox?

Yes. The virus is NOT transmitted by sexual contact. But the vaccine virus can be moved by touching the vaccination site. So, you can continue intimate relationships unless there is a medical reason for you not to get the smallpox vaccine. But make sure the vaccination site is covered and neither of you touch it. You want to avoid spreading the virus to sensitive body parts. Follow the three simple steps: use bandages, long sleeves, and hand washing.

## What about laundry?

Do not share clothes, towels, or toiletries with somebody who just got a smallpox vaccination. The recent vaccinee should separate his/her clothes and towels from the rest of the family's in the laundry.

Launder clothing and linens that touch the site in hot water with detergent or bleach to kill the virus.



## What about exercising?

Use a waterproof bandage if exercising enough to cause sweat to drip. Avoid swimming and hot tubs until the site has healed (when your scab falls off on its own).